RESPONSIBILITIES: POEMS AND A PLAY BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

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'In dreams begins responsibility'
Old Play.

'How am I fallen from myself, for a long time now
I have not seen the Prince of Chang in my dreams'
Khoung-fou-tseu.

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Four hundred copies of this book have been printed. This copy is No.

Pardon, old fathers, if you still remain
Somewhere in ear-shot for the story's end,
Old Dublin merchant 'free of ten and four'
Or trading out of Galway into Spain;
And country scholar, Robert Emmet's friend,
A hundred-year-old memory to the poor;
Traders or soldiers who have left me blood
That has not passed through any huxter's loin,
Pardon, and you that did not weigh the cost,
Old Butlers when you took to horse and stood
Beside the brackish waters of the Boyne
Till your bad master blenched and all was lost;
And merchant skipper that leaped overboard
After a ragged hat in Biscay Bay,
You most of all, silent and fierce old man
Because you were the spectacle that stirred
My fancy, and set my boyish lips to say
'Only the wasteful virtues earn the sun;'
Pardon that for a barren passion's sake,
Although I have come close on forty-nine
I have no child, I have nothing but a book,
Nothing but that to prove your blood and mine.

January, 1914.

THE GREY ROCK

POETS with whom I learned my trade,
Companions of the Cheshire Cheese,
Here's an old story I've re-made,
Imagining 'twould better please
Your ears than stories now in fashion,
Though you may think I waste my breath
Pretending that there can be passion
That has more life in it than death,
And though at bottling of your wine
The bow-legged Goban had no say;
The moral's yours because it's mine.

When cups went round at close of day —
Is not that how good stories run? —
Somewhere within some hollow hill
If books speak truth, in Slievenamon,
But let that be, the gods were still
And sleepy, having had their meal,
And smoky torches made a glare
On painted pillars, on a deal
Of fiddles and of flutes hung there
By the ancient holy hands that brought them
From murmuring Murias, on cups —
Old Goban hammered them and wrought them,
And put his pattern round their tops
To hold the wine they buy of him.

But from the juice that made them wise
All those had lifted up the dim
Imaginations of their eyes,
For one that was like woman made
Before their sleepy eyelids ran
And trembling with her passion said,
'Come out and dig for a dead man,
Who's burrowing somewhere in the ground,
And mock him to his face and then
Hollo him on with horse and hound,
For he is the worst of all dead men.'

We should be dazed and terror struck,
If we but saw in dreams that room,
Those wine-drenched eyes, and curse our luck
That emptied all our days to come.
I knew a woman none could please,
Because she dreamed when but a child
Of men and women made like these;
And after, when her blood ran wild,
Had ravelled her own story out,
And said, 'In two or in three years
I need must marry some poor lout,'
And having said it burst in tears.
Since, tavern comrades, you have died,
Maybe your images have stood,
Mere bone and muscle thrown aside,

Before that roomful or as good.
You had to face your ends when young —
'Twas wine or women, or some curse —
But never made a poorer song
That you might have a heavier purse,
Nor gave loud service to a cause
That you might have a troop of friends.
You kept the Muses' sterner laws,
And unrepenting faced your ends,
And therefore earned the right — and yet
Dowson and Johnson most I praise —
To troop with those the world's forgot,
And copy their proud steady gaze.

'The Danish troop was driven out
Between the dawn and dusk,' she said;
'Although the event was long in doubt,
Although the King of Ireland's dead
And half the kings, before sundown
All was accomplished.'

'When this day
Murrough, the King of Ireland's son,
Foot after foot was giving way,
He and his best troops back to back
Had perished there, but the Danes ran,
Stricken with panic from the attack,

The shouting of an unseen man;
And being thankful Murrough found,
Led by a footsole dipped in blood
That had made prints upon the ground,
Where by old thorn trees that man stood;
And though when he gazed here and there,
He had but gazed on thorn trees, spoke,
"Who is the friend that seems but air
And yet could give so fine a stroke?"
Thereon a young man met his eye,
Who said, "Because she held me in
Her love, and would not have me die,
Rock-nurtured Aoife took a pin,
And pushing it into my shirt,
Promised that for a pin's sake,
No man should see to do me hurt;
But there it's gone; I will not take
The fortune that had been my shame
Seeing, King's son, what wounds you have."
'Twas roundly spoke, but when night came
He had betrayed me to his grave,
For he and the King's son were dead.
I'd promised him two hundred years,
And when for all I'd done or said—
And these immortal eyes shed tears—
He claimed his country's need was most,
I'd saved his life, yet for the sake

Of a new friend he has turned a ghost.
What does he care if my heart break?
I call for spade and horse and hound
That we may harry him.' Thereon
She cast herself upon the ground
And rent her clothes and made her moan:
'Why are they faithless when their might
Is from the holy shades that rove
The grey rock and the windy light?
Why should the faithfullest heart most love
The bitter sweetness of false faces?
Why must the lasting love what passes,
Why are the gods by men betrayed!'

But thereon every god stood up
With a slow smile and without sound,
And stretching forth his arm and cup
To where she moaned upon the ground,
Suddenly drenched her to the skin;
And she with Goban's wine adrip,
No more remembering what had been,
Stared at the gods with laughing lip.

I have kept my faith, though faith was tried,
To that rock-born, rock-wandering foot,
And the world's altered since you died,
And I am in no good repute

With the loud host before the sea,
That think sword strokes were better meant
Than lover's music — let that be,
So that the wandering foot's content.

THE TWO KINGS

King Eochaid came at sundown to a wood
Westward of Tara. Hurrying to his queen
He had out-ridden his war-wasted men
That with empounded cattle trod the mire.
Where certain beeches mixed a pale green light
With the ground-ivy's blue, he saw a stag
Whiter than curds, its eyes the tint of the sea.
Because it stood upon his path and seemed
More hands in height than any stag in the world
He sat with tightened rein and loosened mouth
Upon his trembling horse, then drove the spur
But the stag stooped and ran at him, and passed,
Rending the horse's flank. King Eochaid reeled
Then drew his sword to hold its levelled point
Against the stag. When horn and steel were met
The horn resounded as though it had been silver,
A sweet, miraculous, terrifying sound.
Horn locked in sword, they tugged and struggled there
As though a stag and unicorn were met
In Africa on Mountain of the Moon,
Until at last the double horns, drawn backward,

Butted below the single and so pierced
The entrails of the horse. Dropping his sword
King Eochaid seized the horns in his strong hands
And stared into the sea-green eye, and so
Hither and thither to and fro they trod
Till all the place was beaten into mire.
The strong thigh and the agile thigh were met,
The hands that gathered up the might of the world,
And hoof and horn that had sucked in their speed
Amid the elaborate wilderness of the air.
Through bush they plunged and over ivied root,
And where the stone struck fire, while in the leaves
A squirrel whinnied and a bird screamed out;
But when at last he forced those sinewy flanks
Against a beech bole, he threw down the beast
And knelt above it with drawn knife. On the instant
It vanished like a shadow, and a cry
So mournful that it seemed the cry of one
Who had lost some unimaginable treasure
Wandered between the blue and the green leaf
And climbed into the air, crumbling away,
Till all had seemed a shadow or a vision
But for the trodden mire, the pool of blood,
The disembowelled horse.
King Eochaid ran,
Toward peopled Tara, nor stood to draw his breath
Until he came before the painted wall,

The posts of polished yew, circled with bronze,
Of the great door; but though the hanging lamps
Showed their faint light through the unshuttered windows,
Nor door, nor mouth, nor slipper made a noise,
Nor on the ancient beaten paths, that wound
From well-side or from plough-land, was there noise;
And there had been no sound of living thing
Before him or behind, but that far-off
On the horizon edge bellowed the herds.
Knowing that silence brings no good to kings,
And mocks returning victory, he passed
Between the pillars with a beating heart
And saw where in the midst of the great hall
Pale-faced, alone upon a bench, Edain
Sat upright with a sword before her feet.
Her hands on either side had gripped the bench
Her eyes were cold and steady, her lips tight.
Some passion had made her stone. Hearing a foot
She started and then knew whose foot it was;
But when he thought to take her in his arms
She motioned him afar, and rose and spoke:
'I have sent out into the fields and woods
The fighting men and servants of this house,
For I would have your judgment upon one
Who is self-accused. If she be innocent
She would not look in any known man's face
Till judgment has been given, and if guilty,

Will never look again on known man's face.'
And at these words he paled, as she had paled,
Knowing that he should find upon her lips
The meaning of that monstrous day.
Then she:
"You brought me where your brother Ardan sat
Always in his one seat, and bid me care him
Through that strange illness that had fixed him there,
And should he die to heap his burial mound
And carve his name in Ogham." Eochaid said,
'If he be living still the whole world's mine
But if not living, half the world is lost.'
'I bid them make his bed under this roof
And carried him his food with my own hands,
And so the weeks passed by. But when I said
'What is this trouble?' he would answer nothing,
Though always at my words his trouble grew;
And I but asked the more, till he cried out,
Weary of many questions: 'There are things
That make the heart akin to the dumb stone.'
Then I replied: 'Although you hide a secret,
Hopeless and dear, or terrible to think on,
Speak it, that I may send through the wide world
For medicine.' Thereon he cried aloud:
'Day after day you question me, and I,
Because there is such a storm amid my thoughts
I shall be carried in the gust, command,

Forbid, beseech and waste my breath.' Then I,
'Although the thing that you have hid were evil,
The speaking of it could be no great wrong,
And evil must it be, if done 'twere worse
Than mound and stone that keep all virtue in,
And loosen on us dreams that waste our life,
Shadows and shows that can but turn the brain.'
But finding him still silent I stooped down
And whispering that none but he should hear,
Said: "If a woman has put this on you,
My men, whether it please her or displease,
And though they have to cross the Loughlan waters
And take her in the middle of armed men,
Shall make her look upon her handiwork,
That she may quench the rick she has fired; and though
She may have worn silk clothes, or worn a crown,
She'll not be proud, knowing within her heart
That our sufficient portion of the world
Is that we give, although it be brief giving,
Happiness to children and to men."
Then he, driven by his thought beyond his thought,
And speaking what he would not though he would,
Sighed: 'You, even you yourself, could work the cure!'
And at those words I rose and I went out
And for nine days he had food from other hands,
And for nine days my mind went whirling round
The one disastrous zodiac, muttering

That the immedicable mound's beyond
Our questioning, beyond our pity even.
But when nine days had gone I stood again
Before his chair and bending down my head
Told him, that when Orion rose, and all
The women of his household were asleep,
To go — for hope would give his limbs the power —
To an old empty woodman's house that's hidden
Close to a clump of beech trees in the wood
Westward of Tara, there to await a friend
That could, as he had told her, work his cure
And would be no harsh friend.'
When night had deepened,
I groped my way through boughs, and over roots,
Till oak and hazel ceased and beech began
And found the house, a sputtering torch within,
And stretched out sleeping on a pile of skins
Ardan, and though I called to him and tried
To shake him out of sleep, I could not rouse him.
I waited till the night was on the turn,
Then fearing that some labourer, on his way
To plough or pasture-land, might see me there
Went out.
Among the ivy-covered rocks,
As on the blue light of a sword, a man
Who had unnatural majesty, and eyes
Like the eyes of some great kite scouring the woods,

Stood on my path. Trembling from hand to foot
I gazed at him like grouse upon a kite,
But with a voice that had unnatural music
'A weary wooing and a long,' he said,
'Speaking of love through other lips and looking
Under the eyelids of another, for it was my craft
That put a passion in the sleeper there,
And when I had got my will and drawn you here,
Where I may speak to you alone, my craft
Sucked up the passion out of him again
And left mere sleep. He'll wake when the sun wakes
Push out his vigorous limbs and rub his eyes
And wonder what has ailed him these twelve months.'
I cowered back upon the wall in terror
But that sweet-sounding voice ran on: 'Woman
I was your husband when you rode the air,
Danced in the whirling foam and in the dust,
In days you have not kept in memory,
Being betrayed into a cradle, and I come
That I may claim you as my wife again.'
I was no longer terrified, his voice
Had half awakened some old memory,
Yet answered him: 'I am King Eochaid's wife
And with him have found every happiness
Women can find.' With a most masterful voice,
That made the body seem as it were a string
Under a bow, he cried: 'What happiness

Can lovers have that know their happiness
Must end at the dumb stone? But where we build
Our sudden palaces in the still air
Pleasure itself can bring no weariness,
Nor can time waste the cheek, nor is there foot
That has grown weary of the whirling dance,
Nor an unlaughing mouth, but mine that mourns,
Among those mouths that sing their sweethearts' praise,
Your empty bed.' 'How should I love,' I answered
'Were it not that when the dawn has lit my bed
And shown my husband sleeping there, I have sighed,
"Your strength and nobleness will pass away."
Or how should love be worth its pains were it not
That when he has fallen asleep within my arms,
Being wearied out, I love in man the child?
What can they know of love that do not know
She builds her nest upon a narrow ledge
Above a windy precipice?' Then he:
'Seeing that when you come to the death-bed
You must return, whether you would or no,
This human life blotted from memory,
Why must I live some thirty, forty years,
Alone with all this useless happiness?'
Thereon he seized me in his arms, but I
Thrust him away with both my hands and cried
'Never will I believe there is any change
Can blot out of my memory this life

Sweetened by death, but if I could believe
That were a double hunger in my lips
For what is doubly brief.'
And now the shape,
My hands were pressed to, vanished suddenly.
I staggered, but a beech tree stayed my fall
And clinging to it I could hear the cocks
Crow upon Tara.'
King Eochaid bowed his head
And thanked her for her kindness to his brother,
For that she promised, and for that refused.

Thereon the bellowing of the empounded herds
Rose round the walls, and through the bronze-ringed door
Jostled and shouted those war-wasted men,
And in the midst King Eochaid's brother stood.
He'd heard that din on the horizon's edge
And ridden towards it, being ignorant.

TO A WEALTHY MAN WHO PROMISED A SECOND SUBSCRIPTION TO THE DUBLIN MUNICIPAL GALLERY IF IT WERE PROVED THE PEOPLE WANTED PICTURES

You gave but will not give again
Until enough of Paudeen's pence
By Biddy's halfpennies have lain
To be 'some sort of evidence,'
Before you'll put your guineas down,
That things it were a pride to give
Are what the blind and ignorant town
Imagines best to make it thrive.
What cared Duke Ercole, that bid
His mummers to the market place,
What th' onion-sellers thought or did
So that his Plautus set the pace
For the Italian comedies?
And Guidobaldo, when he made
That grammar school of courtesies
Where wit and beauty learned their trade
Upon Urbino's windy hill,
Had sent no runners to and fro
That he might learn the shepherds' will.
And when they drove out Cosimo,
Indifferent how the rancour ran,
He gave the hours they had set free

To Michelozzo's latest plan
For the San Marco Library,
Whence turbulent Italy should draw
Delight in Art whose end is peace,
In logic and in natural law
By sucking at the dugs of Greece.

Your open hand but shows our loss,
For he knew better how to live.
Let Paudeens play at pitch and toss,
Look up in the sun's eye and give
What the exultant heart calls good
That some new day may breed the best
Because you gave, not what they would
But the right twigs for an eagle's nest!

December, 1912.

SEPTEMBER, 1913

What need you, being come to sense,
But fumble in a greasy till
And add the halfpence to the pence
And prayer to shivering prayer, until
You have dried the marrow from the bone;
For men were born to pray and save,
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet they were of a different kind
The names that stilled your childish play
They have gone about the world like wind,
But little time had they to pray
For whom the hangman's rope was spun,
And what, God help us, could they save:
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Was it for this the wild geese spread
The grey wing upon every tide;
For this that all that blood was shed,
For this Edward Fitzgerald died,
And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,
All that delirium of the brave;
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet could we turn the years again,
And call those exiles as they were,
In all their loneliness and pain
You'd cry 'some woman's yellow hair
Has maddened every mother's son:'
They weighed so lightly what they gave,
But let them be, they're dead and gone,
They're with O'Leary in the grave.

TO A FRIEND WHOSE WORK HAS COME TO NOTHING

Now all the truth is out,
Be secret and take defeat
From any brazen throat,
For how can you compete,
Being honour bred, with one
Who, were it proved he lies,
Were neither shamed in his own
Nor in his neighbours' eyes;
Bred to a harder thing
Than Triumph, turn away
And like a laughing string
Whereon mad fingers play
Amid a place of stone,
Be secret and exult,
Because of all things known
That is most difficult.

PAUDEEN

Indignant at the fumbling wits, the obscure spite
Of our old Paudeen in his shop, I stumbled blind
Among the stones and thorn trees, under morning light,
Until a curlew cried and in the luminous wind
A curlew answered, and I was startled by the thought
That on the lonely height where all are in God's eye,
There cannot be, confusion of our sound forgot,
A single soul that lacks a sweet crystaline cry.

TO A SHADE

If you have revisited the town, thin Shade,
Whether to look upon your monument
(I wonder if the builder has been paid)
Or happier thoughted when the day is spent
To drink of that salt breath out of the sea
When grey gulls fly about instead of men,
And the gaunt houses put on majesty:
Let these content you and be gone again;
For they are at their old tricks yet.
A man
Of your own passionate serving kind who had brought
In his full hands what, had they only known,
Had given their children's children loftier thought,
Sweeter emotion, working in their veins
Like gentle blood, has been driven from the place,
And insult heaped upon him for his pains
And for his open-handedness, disgrace;
An old foul mouth that once cried out on you
Herding the pack.
Unquiet wanderer
Draw the Glasnevin coverlet anew
About your head till the dust stops your ear,
The time for you to taste of that salt breath
And listen at the corners has not come;
You had enough of sorrow before death —
Away, away! You are safer in the tomb.

September, 29th. 1913.

WHEN HELEN LIVED

We have cried in our despair
That men desert,
For some trivial affair
Or noisy, insolent, sport,
Beauty that we have won
From bitterest hours;
Yet we, had we walked within
Those topless towers
Where Helen walked with her boy,
Had given but as the rest
Of the men and women of Troy,
A word and a jest.

THE ATTACK ON 'THE PLAYBOY OF THE WESTERN WORLD' 1907

Once when midnight smote the air,
Eunuchs ran through Hell and met
Round about Hell's Gate to stare
At great Juan riding by;
And like these to rail and sweat
Staring on his sinewy thigh.

THE THREE BEGGARS

'Though to my feathers in the wet,
I have stood here from break of day,
I have not found a thing to eat
For only rubbish comes my way.

Am I to live on lebeen-lone?'
Muttered the old crane of Gort.
'For all my pains on lebeen-lone.'

King Guari walked amid his court,
The palace-yard and river-side
And there to three old beggars said:
'You that have wandered far and wide,
Can ravel out what's in my head.
Do men who least desire get most,
Or get the most who most desire?'
A beggar said: 'They get the most
Whom man or devil cannot tire,
And what could make their muscles taut
Unless desire had made them so.'
But Guari laughed with secret thought
'If that be true as it seems true,
One of you three is a rich man
For he shall have a thousand pounds
Who is first asleep, if but he can
Sleep before the third noon sounds.'
And thereon merry as a bird,
With his old thoughts King Guari went
From river-side and palace-yard
And left them to their argument.
'And if I win,' one beggar said,
'Though I am old I shall persuade

A pretty girl to share my bed,
The second, 'I shall learn a trade,
The third: 'I'll hurry to the course
Among the other gentlemen.
And lay it all upon a horse.'
'But now that I have thought again,
There is a solid dignity
About a farm,' the second cried.

The exorbitant dreams of beggary,
That idleness had borne to pride,
Sang through their teeth from noon to noon;
And when the second twilight brought
The frenzy of the beggars' moon
They closed their blood-shot eyes for naught.
One beggar cried: 'You're shamming sleep,'
And thereupon their anger grew,
Till they were whirling in a heap.

They'd mauled and bitten the night through
Or sat upon their heels to rail,
And when old Guari came and stood
Before the three to end this tale,
They were commingling lice and blood.
'Time's up,' he cried, and all the three
With blood-shot eyes upon him stared.
'Time's up,' he cried, and all the three
Fell down upon the dust and snored.

'Maybe I shall be lucky yet,
Now they are silent,' said the crane.
'Though to my feathers in the wet,
I've stood as I were made of stone
And seen the rubbish run about,
It's certain there are trout somewhere
And maybe I shall take a trout
If but I do not seem to care.'

THE THREE HERMITS

Three old hermits took the air
By a cold and desolate sea,
First was muttering a prayer,
Second rummaged for a flea;
On a windy stone, the third,
Giddy with his hundreth year,
Sang unnoticed like a bird.
'Though the Door of Death is near
And what waits behind the door,
Three times in a single day
I, though upright on the shore,
Fall asleep when I should pray.'
So the first but now the second,
'We're but given what we have earned
When all thoughts and deeds are reckoned,
So it's plain to be discerned
That the shades of holy men,
Who have failed being weak of will,

Pass the Door of Birth again,
And are plagued by crowds, until
They've the passion to escape,'
Moaned the other 'They are thrown
Into some most fearful shape.'
But the second mocked his moan:
'They are not changed to anything,
Having loved God once, but maybe,
To a poet or a king
Or a witty lovely lady.'
While he'd rummaged rags and hair,
Caught and cracked his flea, the third,
Giddy with his hundreth year
Sang unnoticed like a bird.

BEGGAR TO BEGGAR CRIED

'Time to put off the world and go somewhere
And find my health again in the sea air,'
Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-struck,
'And make my soul before my pate is bare.'

'And get a comfortable wife and house
To rid me of the devil in my shoes,'
Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-struck,
'And the worse devil that is between my thighs.'

'And though I'd marry with a comely lass,
She need not be too comely— let it pass,'

Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-struck,
'But there's a devil in a looking-glass.'

'Nor should she be too rich, because the rich
Are driven by wealth as beggars by the itch,'
Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-struck,
'And cannot have a humourous happy speech.'

'And there I'll grow respected at my ease,
And hear amid the garden's nightly peace,'
Beggar to beggar cried, being frenzy-struck,
'The wind-blown clamour of the barnacle-geese.'

RUNNING TO PARADISE

As I came over Windy Gap
They threw a halfpenny into my cap
For I am running to Paradise.
And all that I need do is to wish
And somebody puts his hand in the dish
To throw me a bit of salted fish
And there the king is but as the beggar.

My brother Mourteen is worn out
With skelping his big brawling lout,
While I am running to Paradise.
A poor life do what he can,
And though we keep a dog and a gun,

A serving maid and a serving man,
And there the king is but as the beggar.

Poor men have grown to be rich men,
And rich men grown to be poor again,
While I am running to Paradise.
And many a darling wit's grown dull
That tossed a bare heel when at school,
Now it has filled an old sock full,
And there the king is but as the beggar.

The wind is old and still at play
While I must hurry upon my way
For I am running to Paradise.
Yet never have I lit on a friend
To take my fancy like the wind
That nobody can buy or bind
And there the king is but as the beggar.

THE HOUR BEFORE DAWN

A one-legged, one-armed, one-eyed man
A bundle of rags upon a crutch
Stumbled on windy Cruachan
Cursing the wind. It was as much
As the one sturdy leg could do
To keep him upright while he cursed.
He counted, where long years ago

Queen Maeve's nine Maines had been nursed.
A pair of lapwings, one old sheep
And not a house to the plain's edge,
When close to his right hand a heap
Of grey stones and a rocky ledge
Reminded him that he could make,
If he but shifted a few stones,
A shelter till the daylight broke.
But while he fumbled with the stones
They toppled over; 'Were it not
I have a lucky wooden shin
I had been hurt,' the old beggar thought
And thereon saw, where stones had been
A dark deep hole in the rock's face,
Trembled and gasped and should have run
Being certain it was no right place
But the Hell Mouth at Cruachan
And stuffed with all that's old and bad;
And yet stood still, because inside
He had seen a red-haired jolly lad
In some outlandish coat beside
A ladle and a tub of beer,
Plainly no phantom by his look;
So with a laugh at his own fear
He crawled into that pleasant nook.
Young Red-head stretched himself to yawn
And murmured 'May God curse the night

That's grown uneasy near the dawn
So that it seems even I sleep light;
And who are you that wakens me?
Has one of Maeve's nine brawling sons
Grown tired of his own company?
But let him keep his grave for once
I have to find the sleep I have lost.'
And then at last being wide awake
'I took you for a brawling ghost,
Say what you please, but from day-break
I'll sleep another century.'
The beggar deaf to all but hope
Went down upon a hand and knee
And took the wooden ladle up
And would have dipped it in the beer
But the other pushed his hand aside,
'Before you have dipped it in the beer
That sacred Goban brewed,' he cried
'I'll have my say, till I am able
To judge if a light sleeping fool
Would have his fill out of my ladle
To make a clatter in the hole
In the bad hour before the dawn.
You've but to drink the beer and say
I'll sleep until the winter's gone,
Or maybe, to Midsummer Day
And so it will be. At the first

I waited so for that or this—
Because the weather was a-cursed
Or I'd no woman there to kiss,
And slept for half a year or so;
But year by year I found that less
Gave me such pleasure I'd forego
Even a half hour's nothingness,
And when at one year's end I found
I had not waked a single minute
I chose this burrow under ground
And sleep away all Time within it.
My sleep were now nine centuries
But for those mornings when I find
The lapwing at their foolish cries
And the sheep bleating at the wind
As when I also played the fool.'

The beggar in a rage began
Upon his hunkers in the hole
'It's plain that you are no right man
To mock at everything I love
As if it were not worth the doing.
I'd have a merry life enough
If a good Easter wind were blowing,
And though the winter wind is bad
I should not be too down in the mouth
For anything you did or said
If but this wind were in the south.'

But the other cried, 'You long for spring
Or that the wind would shift a point
And do not know that you would bring,
If time were suppler in the joint,
Neither the spring nor the south wind
But the hour when you shall pass away
And leave no smoking wick behind,
For all life longs for the Last Day
And there's no man but cocks his ear
To know when Michael's trumpets cries
That flesh and bone may disappear,
And souls as if they were but sighs,
And there be nothing but God left;
But I alone being blessed keep
Like some old rabbit to my cleft
And wait Him in a drunken sleep.'
He dipped his ladle in the tub
And drank and yawned and stretched him out.

The other shouted, 'You would rob
My life of every pleasant thought
And every comfortable thing
And so take that and that.' Thereon
He gave him a great pummelling,
But might have pummelled at a stone
For all the sleeper knew or cared;
And after heaped the stones again
And cursed and prayed, and prayed and cursed

'Oh God if he got loose !' And then
In fury and in panic fled
From the Hell Mouth at Cruachan
And gave God thanks that overhead
The clouds were brightening with the dawn.

THE PLAYER QUEEN

(Song from an Unfinished Play)

My mother dandled me and sang,
'How young it is, how young !'
And made a golden cradle
That on a willow swung.

'He went away,' my mother sang,
'When I was brought to bed,'
And all the while her needle pulled
The gold and silver thread.

She pulled the thread and bit the thread
And made a golden gown,
And wept because she'd dreamt that I
Was born to wear a crown.

'When she was got' my mother sang,
'I heard a sea-mew cry,
And saw a flake of the yellow foam
That dropped upon my thigh.'

How therefore could she help but braid
The gold into my hair,
And dream that I should carry
The golden top of care?

THE REALISTS

Hope that you may understand!
What can books of men that wive
In a dragon-guarded land,
Paintings of the dolphin-drawn
Sea-nymphs in their pearly waggons
Do, but awake a hope to live
That had gone
With the dragons?

I

THE WITCH

Toil and grow rich,
What's that but to lie
With a foul witch
And after, drained dry,
To be brought
To the chamber where
Lies one long sought
With despair.

II

THE PEACOCK

What's riches to him
That has made a great peacock
With the pride of his eye?
The wind-beaten, stone-grey,
And desolate Three-rock
Would nourish his whim.
Live he or die
Amid wet rocks and heather,
His ghost will be gay
Adding feather to feather
For the pride of his eye.

THE MOUNTAIN TOMB

Pour wine and dance if Manhood still have pride.
Bring roses if the rose be yet in bloom;
The cataract smokes on the mountain side,
Our Father Rosicross is in his tomb.

Pull down the blinds, bring fiddle and clarionet
That there be no foot silent in the room
Nor mouth from kissing, nor from wine unwet,
Our Father Rosicross is in his tomb.

In vain, in vain; the cataract still cries
The everlasting taper lights the gloom;

All wisdom shut into his onyx eyes
Our Father Rosicross sleeps in his tomb.

TO A CHILD DANCING IN THE WIND

I

Dance there upon the shore;
What need have you to care
For wind or water's roar?
And tumble out your hair
That the salt drops have wet;
Being young you have not known
The fool's triumph, nor yet
Love lost as soon as won,
Nor the best labourer dead
And all the sheaves to bind.
What need have you to dread
The monstrous crying of wind?

II

Has no one said those daring
Kind eyes should be more learn'd?
I have found out how despairing
The moths are when they are burned,
But I am old and you are young
So we speak a different tongue.

O you will take whatever's offered
And dream that all the world's a friend,

Suffer as your mother suffered,
Be as broken in the end.
I could have warned you — but you are young,
And I speak a barbarous tongue.

A MEMORY OF YOUTH

The moments passed as at a play,
I had the wisdom love brings forth;
I had my share of mother wit
And yet for all that I could say,
And though I had her praise for it,
A cloud blown from the cut-throat north
Suddenly hid love's moon away.

Believing every word I said
I praised her body and her mind
Till pride had made her eyes grow bright,
And pleasure made her cheeks grow red,
And vanity her footfall light,
Yet we, for all that praise, could find
Nothing but darkness overhead.

We sat as silent as a stone,
We knew, though she'd not said a word,
That even the best of love must die,
And had been savagely undone
Were it not that love upon the cry

Of a most ridiculous little bird
Tore from the clouds his marvellous moon.

FALLEN MAJESTY

Although crowds gathered once if she but showed her face,
And even old men's eyes grew dim, this hand alone,
Like some last courtier at a gypsy camping place,
Babbling of fallen majesty, records what's gone.

The lineaments, a heart that laughter has made sweet,
These, these remain, but I record what's gone. A crowd
Will gather, and not know it walks the very street
Whereon a thing once walked that seemed a burning cloud.

FRIENDS

Now must I these three praise—
Three women that have wrought
What joy is in my days;
One that no passing thought,
Nor those unpassing cares,
No, not in these fifteen
Many times troubled years,
Could ever come between
Heart and delighted heart;
And one because her hand
Had strength that could unbind
What none can understand,

What none can have and thrive,
Youth's dreamy load, till she
So changed me that I live
Labouring in ecstasy.
And what of her that took
All till my youth was gone
With scarce a pitying look?
How should I praise that one?
When day begins to break
I count my good and bad,
Being wakeful for her sake,
Remembering what she had,
What eagle look still shows,
While up from my heart's root
So great a sweetness flows
I shake from head to foot.

THE COLD HEAVEN

Suddenly I saw the cold and rook-delighting Heaven
That seemed as though ice burned and was but the more ice.
And thereupon imagination and heart were driven
So wild, that every casual thought of that and this
Vanished, and left but memories, that should be out of season
With the hot blood of youth, of love crossed long ago;
And I took all the blame out of all sense and reason,
Until I cried and trembled and rocked to and fro,
Riddled with light. Ah! when the ghost begins to quicken.

Confusion of the death-bed over, is it sent
Out naked on the roads, as the books say, and stricken
By the injustice of the skies for punishment?

THAT THE NIGHT COME

She lived in storm and strife,
Her soul had such desire
For what proud death may bring
That it could not endure
The common good of life,
But lived as 't were a king
That packed his marriage day
With banneret and pennon,
Trumpet and kettledrum,
And the outrageous cannon,
To bundle time away
That the night come.

AN APPOINTMENT

Being out of heart with government
I took a broken root to fling
Where the proud, wayward squirrel went,
Taking delight that he could spring;
And he, with that low whinnying sound
That is like laughter, sprang again
And so to the other tree at a bound.
Nor the tame will, nor timid brain,

Bred that fierce tooth and cleanly limb
And threw him up to laugh on the bough;
No government appointed him.

I

THE MAGI

Now as at all times I can see in the mind's eye
In their stiff, painted clothes the pale unsatisfied ones
Appear and disappear in the blue depth of the sky
With all their ancient faces like rain-beaten stones,
And all their helms of silver hovering side by side,
And all their eyes still fixed, hoping to find once more,
Being by Calvary's turbulence unsatisfied,
The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor.

II

THE DOLLS

A doll in the doll-maker's house
Looks at the cradle and balls:
'That is an insult to us.'
But the oldest of all the dolls
Who had seen, being kept for show,
Generations of his sort,
Out-screams the whole shelf: 'Although
There's not a man can report
Evil of this place,
The man and the woman bring

Hither to our disgrace,
A noisy and filthy thing.'
Hearing him groan and stretch
The doll-maker's wife is aware
Her husband has heard the wretch,
And crouched by the arm of his chair,
She murmurs into his ear,
Head upon shoulder leant:
'My dear, my dear, oh dear,
It was an accident.'

A COAT

I made my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies
From heel to throat;
But the fools caught it,
Wore it in the world's eye
As though they'd wrought it.
Song, let them take it
For there's more enterprise
In walking naked.

THE HOUR-GLASS
NEW VERSION

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY

WISE MAN.
BRIDGET, his wife.
TEIGUE, a fool.
ANGEL.
Children and Pupils.

Pupils come in and stand before the stage curtain which is still closed. One pupil carries a book.

FIRST PUPIL

He said we might choose the subject for the lesson.

SECOND PUPIL

There is none of us wise enough to do that.

THIRD PUPIL

It would need a great deal of wisdom to know what it is we want to know.

FOURTH PUPIL

I will question him.

FIFTH PUPIL

You?

FOURTH PUPIL

Last night I dreamt that someone came and told me to question him. I was to say to him, 'you were wrong to say there is no God and no soul— maybe,

if there is not much of either, there is yet some tatters, some tag on the wind— so to speak— some rag upon a bush, some bob-tail of a god.' I will argue with him,— nonsense though it be— according to my dream, and you will see how well I can argue, and what thoughts I have.

FIRST PUPIL

I'd as soon listen to dried peas in a bladder, as listen to your thoughts. (Fool comes in)

FOOL

Give me a penny.

SECOND PUPIL

Let us choose a subject by chance. Here is his big book. Let us turn over the pages slowly. Let one of us put down his finger without looking. The passage his finger lights on will be the subject for the lesson.

FOOL

Give me a penny.

THIRD PUPIL

(taking up book) How heavy it is.

FOURTH PUPIL

Spread it on Teigue's back, and then we can all stand round and see the choice.

SECOND PUPIL

Make him spread out his arms.

FOURTH PUPIL

Down on your knees. Hunch up your back. Spread your arms out now, and look like a golden eagle in a church. Keep still, Keep still.

FOOL

Give me a penny.

THIRD PUPIL

Is that the right cry for an eagle cock?

SECOND PUPIL

I'll turn the pages— you close your eyes and put your finger down.

THIRD PUPIL

That's it, and then he cannot blame us for the choice.

FIRST PUPIL

There, I have chosen. Fool, keep still— and if what's wise is strange and sounds like nonsense, we've made a good choice.

FIFTH PUPIL

The Master has come.

FOOL

Will anybody give a penny to a fool? (One of the pupils draws back the stage curtain showing the Master sitting at his desk. One pupil puts the book before him)

FIRST PUPIL

We have chosen the passage for the lesson, Master.

'There are two living countries, one visible and one invisible, and when it is summer there, it is winter here, and when it is November with us, it is lambing-time there.'

WISE MAN

That passage, that passage! what mischief has there been since yesterday?

FIRST PUPIL

None, Master.

WISE MAN

Oh, yes, there has; some craziness has fallen from the wind, or risen from the graves of old men, and made you choose that subject.

FOURTH PUPIL

I knew that it was folly, but they would have it.

THIRD PUPIL

Had we not better say we picked it by chance?

SECOND PUPIL

No, he would say we were children still.

FIRST PUPIL

I have found a sentence under that one that says— as though to show it had a hidden meaning— a beggar wrote it upon the walls of Babylon.

WISE MAN

Then find some beggar and ask him what it means, for I will have nothing to do with it.

FOURTH PUPIL

Come, Teigue, what is the old book's meaning when it says that there are sheep that drop their lambs in November?

FOOL

To be sure— everybody knows, everybody in the world knows, when it is Spring with us, the trees are withering there, when it is Summer with us, the snow is falling there, and have I not myself heard the lambs that are there all bleating on a cold November day— to be sure, does not everybody with an intellect know that; and maybe when it's night with us, it is day with them, for many a time I have seen the roads lighted before me.

WISE MAN

The beggar who wrote that on Babylon wall meant that there is a spiritual kingdom that cannot be seen or known till the faculties whereby we master the kingdom of this world wither away, like green things in winter. A monkish thought, the most mischievous thought that ever passed out of a man's mouth.

FIRST PUPIL

If he meant all that, I will take an oath that he was spindle-shanked, and cross-eyed, and had a lousy itching shoulder, and that his heart was crosser

than his eyes, and that he wrote it out of malice.

SECOND PUPIL

Let's come away and find a better subject.

FOURTH PUPIL

And maybe now you'll let me choose.

FIRST PUPIL

Come.

WISE MAN

Were it but true 'twould alter everything
Until the stream of the world had changed its course,
And that and all our thoughts had run
Into some cloudy thunderous spring
They dream to be its source—
Aye, to some frenzy of the mind;
And all that we have done would be undone,
Our speculation as the wind. (A pause)
I have dreamed it twice.

FIRST PUPIL

Something has troubled him.

(Pupils go out)

WISE MAN

Twice have I dreamed it in a morning dream,
Now nothing serves my pupils but to come
With a like thought. Reason is growing dim.
A moment more and Frenzy will beat his drum
And laugh aloud and scream.

And I must dance in the dream,
No, no, but it is like a hawk, a hawk of the air,
It has swooped down— and this swoop makes the third—
And what can I, but tremble like a bird?

FOOL

Give me a penny.

WISE MAN

That I should dream it twice, and after that, that they should pick it out.

FOOL

Won't you give me a penny?

WISE MAN

What do you want? What can it matter to you whether the words I am reading, are wisdom or sheer folly?

FOOL

Such a great wise teacher will not refuse a penny to a fool.

WISE MAN

Seeing that everybody is a fool when he is asleep and dreaming, why do you call me wise?

FOOL

O, I know,— I know, I know what I have seen.

WISE MAN

Well, to see rightly is the whole of wisdom, whatever dream be with us.

FOOL

When I went by Kilcluan, where the bells used to be ringing at the break of every day, I could hear nothing but the people snoring in their houses. When I went by Tubbervanach, where the young men used to be climbing the hill to the blessed well, they were sitting at the cross-roads playing cards. When I went by Carrigoras, where the friars used to be fasting and serving the poor, I saw them drinking wine and obeying their wives. And when I asked what misfortune had brought all these changes, they said it was no misfortune, but that it was the wisdom they had learned from your teaching.

WISE MAN

And you too have called me wise— you would be paid for that good opinion doubtless— Run to the kitchen, my wife will give you food and drink.

FOOL

That's foolish advice for a wise man to give.

WISE MAN

Why, Fool?

FOOL

What is eaten is gone— I want pennies for my bag. I must buy bacon in the shops, and nuts in the market, and strong drink for the time the sun is weak,

and snares to catch the rabbits, and the hares, and a big pot to cook them in.

WISE MAN

I have more to think about than giving pennies to your like, so run away.

FOOL

Give me a penny and I will bring you luck. The fishermen let me sleep among their nets in the loft because I bring them luck, and in the summer time, the wild creatures let me sleep near their nests and their holes. It is lucky even to look at me, but it is much more lucky to give me a penny. If I was not lucky I would starve.

WISE MAN

What are the shears for?

FOOL

I won't tell you. If I told you, you would drive them away.

WISE MAN

Drive them away, who would I drive away?

FOOL

I won't tell you.

WISE MAN

Not if I give you a penny?

FOOL

No.

WISE MAN

Not if I give you two pennies?

FOOL

You will be very lucky if you give me two pennies, but I won't tell you.

WISE MAN

Three pennies?

FOOL

Four, and I will tell you.

WISE MAN

Very well— four, but from this out I will not call you, Teigue the Fool.

FOOL

Let me come close to you, where nobody will hear me, but first you must promise not to drive them away. (Wise Man nods) Every day men go out dressed in black and spread great black nets over the hills, great black nets.

WISE MAN

A strange place that to fish in.

FOOL

They spread them out on the hills that they may catch the feet of the angels; but every morning just before the dawn, I go out and cut the nets with the shears and the angels fly away.

WISE MAN

(speaking with excitement) Ah, now I know that

you are Teigue the Fool, You say that I am wise, and yet I say, there are no angels.

FOOL

I have seen plenty of angels.

WISE MAN

No, no, you have not.

FOOL

They are plenty if you but look about you. They are like the blades of grass.

WISE MAN

They are plenty as the blades of grass — I heard that phrase when I was but a child and was told folly.

FOOL

When one gets quiet. When one is so quiet that there is not a thought in one's head maybe, there is something that wakes up inside one, something happy and quiet, and then all in a minute one can smell summer flowers, and tall people go by, happy and laughing, but they will not let us look at their faces. Oh, no, it is not right that we should look at their faces.

WISE MAN

You have fallen asleep upon a hill, yet, even those that used to dream of angels dream now of other things.

FOOL

I saw one but a moment ago— that is because I am lucky. It was coming behind me, but it was not laughing.

WISE MAN

There's nothing but what men can see when they are awake. Nothing, nothing.

FOOL

I knew you would drive them away.

WISE MAN

Pardon me, Fool,
I had forgotten who I spoke to.
Well, there are your four pennies— Fool, you are called
And all day long they cry, 'come hither, Fool.'
(The Fool goes close to him)
Or else it's, 'Fool, be gone' (The Fool goes further off)
Or, 'Fool, stand there' (The Fool straightens himself up)
Or, 'Fool go sit in the corner' (The Fool sits in the corner)
And all the while
What were they all but fools before I came.
What are they now, but mirrors that seem men,
Because of my image. Fool, hold up your head.
(Fool does so)

What foolish stories they have told of the ghosts
That fumbled with the clothes upon the bed,
Or creaked and shuffled in the corridor,
Or else, if they were pious bred,
Of angels from the skies,
That coming through the door,
Or, it maybe, standing there,
Would solidly out stare
The steadiest eyes with their unnatural eyes,
Aye, on a man's own floor.
(An angel has come in. It should be played by a man if a man can be found with the right voice, and may wear a little golden mask and a halo made of metal.)
Yet it is strange, the strangest thing I have known,
That I should still be haunted by the notion
That there's a crisis of the spirit wherein
We get new sight, and that they know some trick
To turn our thoughts for their own ends to frenzy,
Why do you put your finger to your lip,
And creep away? (Fool goes out)
(Wise Man sees Angel) What are you? Who are you?
I think I saw some like you in my dreams,
When but a child. That thing about your head,—
That brightness in your hair—that flowery branch
But I have done with dreams, I have done with dreams.

ANGEL

I am the crafty one that you have called.

WISE MAN

How that I called?

ANGEL

I am the messenger.

WISE MAN

What message could you bring to one like me?

ANGEL

That you will die when the last grain of sand
Has fallen through this glass.

WISE MAN

I have a wife,
Children and pupils that I cannot leave,
Why must I die, my time is far away?

ANGEL

You have to die because no soul has passed
The heavenly threshold since you have opened school,
But grass grows there, and rust upon the hinge;
And they are lonely that must keep the watch.

WISE MAN

And whither shall I go when I am dead?

ANGEL

You have denied there is a purgatory,
Therefore that gate is closed; you have denied
There is a heaven, and so that gate is closed.

WISE MAN

Where then? For I have said there is no hell.

ANGEL

Hell is the place of those who have denied;
They find there what they planted and what dug,
A Lake of Spaces, and a Wood of Nothing,
And wander there and drift, and never cease
Wailing for substance.

WISE MAN

Pardon me, blessed Angel,
I have denied and taught the like to others.
But how could I believe before my sight
Had come to me?

ANGEL

It is too late for pardon.

WISE MAN

Had I but seen your face as now I see it,
But how can you that live but where we go
In the uncertainty of dizzy dreams
Know why we doubt. Parting, sickness and death,
The rotting of the grass, tempest and drouth,
These are the messengers that came to me.
Why are you silent? You carry in your hands
God's pardon, and you will not give it me,
Why are you silent? Were I not afraid,
I'd kiss your hands, no, no, the hem of your dress.

ANGEL

Only when all the world has testified,
May soul confound it, crying out in joy,
And laughing on its lonely precipice.
What's dearth and death and sickness to the soul,
That knows no virtue but itself, nor could it,
So trembling with delight and mother-naked,
Live unabashed if the arguing world stood by.

WISE MAN

It is as hard for you to understand
Why we have doubted, as it is for us
To banish doubt — what folly have I said?
There can be nothing that you do not know,
Give me a year — a month — a week — a day,
I would undo what I have done — an hour —
Give me until the sand has run in the glass.

ANGEL

Though you may not undo what you have done,
I have this power — if you but find one soul,
That still believes that it shall never cease,
One fish to lie and spawn among the stones
Till the great fisher's net is full again,
You may, the purgatorial fire being passed,
Spring to your peace. (pupils sing in the distance)
'Who stole your wits away
And where are they gone?'

WISE MAN

My pupils come,
Before you have begun to climb the sky
I shall have found that soul. They say they doubt,
But what their mothers dinned into their ears
Cannot have been so lightly rooted up,
Besides, I can disprove what I once proved—
And yet give me some thought, some argument,
More mighty than my own.

ANGEL

Farewell— farewell,
For I am weary of the weight of time.
(Angel goes out. Wise Man makes a step to follow and pauses. Some of his pupils come in at the other side of the stage.)

FIRST PUPIL

Master, master, you must choose the subject.
(Enter other pupils with Fool, about whom they dance; all the pupils may have little cushions on which presently they seat themselves)

SECOND PUPIL

Here is a subject— where have the Fool's wits gone? (singing)
'Who dragged your wits away
Where no one knows?
Or have they run off
On their own pair of shoes?'

FOOL

Give me a penny.

FIRST PUPIL

The Master will find your wits,

SECOND PUPIL

And when they are found, you must not beg for pennies.

THIRD PUPIL

They are hidden somewhere in the badger's hole,
But you must carry an old candle end,
If you would find them.

FOURTH PUPIL

They are up above the clouds.

FOOL

Give me a penny, give me a penny.

FIRST PUPIL

(singing) 'I'll find your wits again,
Come, for I saw them roll,
To where old badger mumbles
In the black hole.'

SECOND PUPIL

(singing) 'No, but an angel stole them
The night that you were born,
And now they are but a rag,
On the moon's horn.'

WISE MAN

Be silent.

FIRST PUPIL

Can you not see that he is troubled? (all the pupils are seated)

WISE MAN

What do you think of when alone at night?
Do not the things your mothers spoke about
Before they took the candle from the bedside,
Rush up into the mind and master it,
Till you believe in them against your will?

SECOND PUPIL

(to first pupil) You answer for us.

THIRD PUPIL

(in a whisper to first pupil) Be careful what you say
If he persuades you to an argument
He will but turn us all to mockery.

FIRST PUPIL

We had no minds until you made them for us;
Our bodies only were our mother's work.

WISE MAN

You answer with incredible things. It is certain
That there is one, — though it may be but one —
Believes in God and in some heaven and hell —
In all those things we put into our prayers.

FIRST PUPIL

We thought those things before our minds were born,
But that was long ago — we are not children.

WISE MAN

You are afraid to tell me what you think
Because I am hot and angry when I am crossed,
I do not blame you for it, but have no fear
For if there's one that sat on smiling there,
As though my arguments were sweet as milk
Yet found them bitter, I will thank him for it,
If he but speak his mind.

FIRST PUPIL

There is no one, Master,
There is not one but found them sweet as milk.

WISE MAN

The things that have been told us in our childhood
Are not so fragile.

SECOND PUPIL

We are no longer children.

THIRD PUPIL

We all believe in you and in what you have taught.

OTHER PUPILS

All, all, all, all, in you, nothing but you.

WISE MAN

I have deceived you— where shall I go for words—
I have no thoughts— my mind has been swept bare.
The messengers that stand in the fiery cloud,
Fling themselves out, if we but dare to question,
And after that, the Babylonian moon
Blots all away.

FIRST PUPIL

(to other pupils) I take his words to mean
That visionaries, and martyrs when they are raised
Above translunary things, and there enlightened,
As the contention is, may lose the light,
And flounder in their speech when the eyes open.

SECOND PUPIL

How well he imitates their trick of speech.

THIRD PUPIL

Their air of mystery.

FOURTH PUPIL

Their empty gaze,
As though they'd looked upon some winged thing,
And would not condescend to mankind after.

FIRST PUPIL

Master, we have all learnt that truth is learnt
When the intellect's deliberate and cold,
As it were a polished mirror that reflects
An unchanged world; and not when the steel melts,
Bubbling and hissing, till there's naught but fume.

WISE MAN

When it is melted, when it all fumes up,
They walk, as when beside those three in the furnace
The form of the fourth.

FIRST PUPIL

Master, there's none among us

That has not heard your mockery of these,
Or thoughts like these, and we have not forgot.

WISE MAN

Something incredible has happened — someone has come,
Suddenly like a grey hawk out of the air,
And all that I declared untrue is true.

FIRST PUPIL

(to other pupils) You'd think the way he says it, that he felt it.
There's not a mummer to compare with him.
He's something like a man.

SECOND PUPIL

Give us some proof.

WISE MAN

What proof have I to give, but that an angel
An instant ago was standing on that spot.
(The pupils rise)

THIRD PUPIL

You dreamed it, Master.

WISE MAN

I was awake as I am now.

FIRST PUPIL

(to the others) I may be dreaming now for all I know.
He wants to show we have no certain proof
Of anything in the world.

SECOND PUPIL

There is this proof,
That shows we are awake— we have all one world
While every dreamer has a world of his own,
And sees what no one else can.

THIRD PUPIL

Teigue sees angels.
So when the Master says he has seen an angel,
He may have seen one.

FIRST PUPIL

Both may still be dreamers.
Unless it's proved the angels were alike.

SECOND PUPIL

What sort are the angels, Teigue?

THIRD PUPIL

That will prove nothing.
Unless we are sure, prolonged obedience
Has made one angel like another angel,
As they were eggs.

FIRST PUPIL

The Master's silent now:
For he has found that to dispute with us—
Seeing that he has taught us what we know—
Is but to reason with himself. Let us away,
And find if there is one believer left.

WISE MAN

Yes, yes. Find me but one that still believes

The things that we were told when we were children.

THIRD PUPIL

He'll mock and maul him.

FOURTH PUPIL

From the first I knew
He wanted somebody to argue with. (They go)

WISE MAN

I have no reason left, all dark, all dark.
(Pupils return laughing. They push forward fourth pupil)

FIRST PUPIL

Here, Master, is the very man you want.
He said, when we were studying the book,
That maybe after all the monks were right,
And you mistaken, and if we but gave him time,
He'd prove that it was so.

FOURTH PUPIL

I never said it.

WISE MAN

Dear friend, dear friend, do you believe in God?

FOURTH PUPIL

Master, they have invented this to mock me.

WISE MAN

You are afraid of me.

FOURTH PUPIL

They know well, Master,
That all I said was but to make them argue.
They've pushed me in to make a mock of me,
Because they knew I could take either side
And beat them at it.

WISE MAN

If you believe in God,
You are my soul's one friend. (Pupils laugh)
Mistress or wife
Can give us but our good or evil luck
Amid the howling world, but you shall give
Eternity, and those sweet-throated things
That drift above the moon. (The pupils look at one another and are silent)

SECOND PUPIL

How strange he is.

WISE MAN

The angel that stood there upon that spot,
Said that my soul was lost unless I found,
Before the sands in the Hour-glass had run out,
One that believed.

FOURTH PUPIL

Cease mocking at me, Master.
For I am certain that there is no God
Nor immortality, and they that said it
Made a fantastic tale from a starved dream

To plague our hearts. Will that content you master?

WISE MAN

The giddy glass is emptier every moment,
And you stand there, debating, laughing and wrangling.
Out of my sight! Out of my sight, I say.
(He drives them out)
I'll call my wife, for what can women do,
That carry us in the darkness of their bodies,
But mock the reason that lets nothing grow
Unless it grow in light. Bridget, Bridget.
A woman never ceases to believe.
Say what we will— Bridget, come quickly, Bridget.
(Bridget comes in wearing her apron. Her sleeves turned up from her floury arms)
Wife, what do you believe in? Tell me the truth,
And not — as is the habit with you all —
Something you think will please me. Do you pray
Sometimes when you're alone in the house, do you pray?

BRIDGET

Prayers— no, you taught me to leave them off long ago. At first I was sorry, but I am glad now, for I am sleepy in the evenings.

WISE MAN

Do you believe in God?

BRIDGET

Oh, a good wife only believes in what her husband tells her.

WISE MAN

But sometimes, when the children are asleep
And I am in the school, do you not think
About the Martyrs and the saints and the angels,
And all the things that you believed in once?

BRIDGET

I think about nothing— sometimes I wonder if the linen is bleaching white, or I go out to see if the crows are picking up the chicken's food.

WISE MAN

My God,— my God! I will go out myself.
My pupils said that they would find a man
That had the old belief— they may have found him.
Therefore I will go out— but if I go
The glass will let the sands run out unseen.
I cannot go— I cannot leave the glass.
Go call my pupils— I can explain all now,
Only when all our hold on life is shaken,
Only in spiritual terror can the Truth
Come through the broken mind— as the pease burst
Out of a broken pease-cod.

(He clutches Bridget as she is going)

Say to them,

That nature would lack all in her most need,
Could not the soul find truth as in a flash,
Upon the battle-field, or in the midst
Of overwhelming waves, and say to them—
But no, they would but answer as I bid.

BRIDGET

You want somebody to get up an argument with.

WISE MAN

Look out and see if there is anyone
There in the street— I cannot leave the glass,
For somebody might shake it, and the sand
If it were shaken might run down on the instant.

BRIDGET

I don't understand a word you are saying. There's a crowd of people talking to your pupils.

WISE MAN

Go out and find if they have found a man
Who did not understand me when I taught,
Or did not listen.

BRIDGET

It is a hard thing to be married to a man of learning that must always be having arguments. Children, don't be meddling with the bread while I am out. (She goes out)

WISE MAN

Strange that I should be blind to the great secret,
And that so simple a man might write it out

Upon a blade of grass or bit of rush
With naught but berry juice, and laugh to himself
Writing it out, because it was so simple. (Enter Bridget followed by the Fool)

FOOL

Give me something; give me a penny to buy bacon in the shops and nuts in the market, and strong drink for the time when the sun is weak.

BRIDGET

I have no pennies. (to Wise Man) Your pupils cannot find anybody to argue with you. There's nobody in the whole country with belief enough for a lover's oath. Can't you be quiet now, and not always wanting to have arguments. It must be terrible to have a mind like that.

WISE MAN

Then I am lost indeed.

BRIDGET

Leave me alone now, I have to make the bread for you and the children. (She goes into kitchen)

WISE MAN

Children, children!

BRIDGET

Your father wants you, run to him.

(Children run in)

WISE MAN

Come to me, children. Do not be afraid.

I want to know if you believe in Heaven,
God or the soul — no, do not tell me yet,
You need not be afraid I shall be angry,
Say what you please — so that it is your thought —
I wanted you to know before you spoke,
That I shall not be angry.

FIRST CHILD

We have not forgotten, Father.

SECOND CHILD

Oh, no, Father.

BOTH CHILDREN

(as if repeating a lesson) There is nothing we cannot see, nothing we cannot touch.

FIRST CHILD

Foolish people used to say that there was, but you have taught us better.

WISE MAN

Go to your mother, go — yet do not go
For she can teach you nothing. If I am dumb
I will have drowned you in the Lake of Spaces
And I, because the sands are running out,
Have but a moment to show it all in. Children,
The sap would die out of the blades of grass
Had they a doubt. They understand it all,
Being the fingers of God's certainty,
Yet can but make their sign into the air.
But could they find their tongues — they'd show it all

But what am I to say that am but one,
When they are millions and they will not speak.
(Children have run out)
But they are gone; what made them run away?
(The fool comes in with a dandelion)
Look at me, tell me if my face is changed,
Is there a notch of the fiend's nail upon it
Already? Is it terrible to sight?
Because the moment's near. (Going to glass)
I dare not look,
I dare not know the moment when they come
To carry me away. (covers glass) Will there be a footfall
Or will there be a sort of tearing sound,
Or else a cracking, as though an iron claw
Had gripped the threshold stone?
(Fool has begun to blow the dandelion)
What are you doing?

FOOL

Wait a minute — four — five — six —

WISE MAN

What are you doing that for?

FOOL

I am blowing the dandelion to find out what hour it is.

WISE MAN

You have heard everything, and that is why

You'd find what hour it is — you'd find that out,
That you may look upon a fleet of devils
Dragging my soul away. You shall not stop,
I will have no one here when they come in,
I will have no one sitting there — no one —
And yet — and yet — there is something strange about you,
Are you the one I seek? Do you believe
In God and the soul, in the undying stuff
That all things have been made of from the first?

FOOL

So you ask me now. I thought when you were asking your pupils, 'will he ask, Teigue the Fool. Yes, he will, he will, no, he will not — yes he will.' But Teigue will say nothing. Teigue will say nothing.

WISE MAN

Tell me quickly.

FOOL

I said, 'Teigue knows everything, not even the green-eyed cats and the hares that milk the cows have Teigue's wisdom' but, Teigue will not speak, he says nothing.

WISE MAN

Speak, speak, for underneath the cover there
The sand is running from the upper glass,
And when the last grain's through, I shall be lost
Unless I have lit upon unshaken faith

Somewhere in somebody.

FOOL

I will not speak. I will not tell you what is in my mind. I will not tell you what is in my bag. You might steal away my thoughts. I met a bodach on the road yesterday, and he said, 'Teigue, tell me how many pennies are in your bag; I will wager three pennies that there are not twenty pennies in your bag; let me put in my hand and count them.' But I gripped the bag the tighter and when I go to sleep at night, I hide the bag where nobody knows.

WISE MAN

There's but one pinch of sand, and I am lost
If you are not he I seek.

FOOL

O, what a lot the Fool knows, but he says nothing.

WISE MAN

(seizing him) I kneel to you — you are the man I have sought
You alone can save me.

FOOL

No, no, what should poor Teigue know, Teigue that is out in all weathers, Teigue that sleeps in the fishers' loft, poor Teigue the Fool.
(He breaks away and goes out)

WISE MAN

The last hope is gone,

And now that it's too late I see it all,
We perish into God and sink away
Into reality — the rest's a dream. (The Fool comes back)

FOOL

There was one there— there by the threshold stone, waiting there and said, 'go in Teigue, and tell him everything that he asks you. He will give you a penny if you tell him.'

WISE MAN

I know enough, that know God's will prevails.

FOOL

Waiting till the moment had come— That is what the one out there was saying, but I might tell you what you asked. That is what he was saying.

WISE MAN

Be silent. May God's will prevail on the instant,
Although His will be my eternal pain.
I have no question:
It is enongh, I know what fixed the station
Of star and cloud.
And knowing all, I cry,
That what so God has willed,
On the instant be fulfilled,
Though that be my damnation.
The stream of the world has changed its course
And with the stream my thoughts have run
Into some cloudy thunderous spring
That is its mountain source —

Aye, to some frenzy of the mind,
For all that we have done's undone,
Our speculation but as the wind.
(He dies)

FOOL

Wise man— Wise man, wake up and I will tell you everything for a penny. It is I, poor Teigue the Fool. Why don't you wake up, and say, 'There is a penny for you, Teigue.' No, no, you will say nothing. You and I, we are the two fools, we know everything, but we will not speak.
(Angel enters holding a casket)
O, look what has come from his mouth ! O, look what has come from his mouth— the white butterfly. He is dead and I have taken his soul in my hands; but I know why you open the lid of that golden box. I must give it to you. There then, (he puts butterfly in casket) he has gone through his pains, and you will open the lid in the Garden of Paradise. (He closes curtain and remains outside it) He is gone, he is gone, he is gone, but come in everybody in the world and look at me.
'I hear the wind a blow
I hear the grass a grow,
And all that I know, I know.'
But I will not speak, I will run away.
(He goes out)

THE END

While I, from that reed-throated whisperer
Who comes at need, although not now as once
A clear articulation in the air
But inwardly, surmise companions
Beyond the fling of the dull ass's hoof
Ben Jonson's phrase — and find when June is come
At Kyle-na-no under that ancient roof
A sterner conscience and a friendlier home
I can forgive even that wrong of wrongs.
Those undreamt accidents that have made me
— Seeing that Fame has perished this long while
Being but a part of ancient ceremony —
Notorious, till all of priceless things
Are but a post the passing dogs defile.

NOTES

PREFATORY POEM

The term 'free of the ten and four' was applied to merchants who were exempted from certain duties by the Irish parliament.

POEMS BEGINNING WITH THAT 'TO A WEALTHY MAN' AND ENDING WITH THAT 'TO A SHADE'

During the thirty years or so during which I have been reading Irish newspapers, three public controversies have stirred my imagination. The first was the Parnell controversy. There were reasons to justify a man's joining either party, but there were none to justify, on one side or on the other, lying accusations forgetful of past service, a frenzy of detraction. And another was the dispute over 'The Playboy.' There were reasons for opposing as for supporting that violent, laughing thing, but none for the lies, for the unscrupulous rhetoric spread against it in Ireland, and from Ireland to America. The third prepared for the Corporation's refusal of a building for Sir Hugh Lane's famous collection of pictures.

One could respect the argument that Dublin, with much poverty and many slums, could not afford the £22,000 the building was to cost the city, but not the minds that used it. One frenzied man compared

the pictures to Troy horse which 'destroyed a city,' and innumerable correspondents described Sir Hugh Lane and those who had subscribed many thousands to give Dublin paintings by Corot, Manet, Monet, Degas, and Renoir, as 'self-seekers,' 'self-advertisers,' 'picture-dealers,' 'log-rolling cranks and faddists,' and one clerical paper told 'picture-dealer Lane' to take himself and his pictures out of that. A member of the Corporation said there were Irish artists who could paint as good if they had a mind to, and another described a half-hour in the temporary gallery in Harcourt Street as the most dismal of his life. Someone else asked instead of these eccentric pictures to be given pictures 'like those beautiful productions displayed in the windows of our city picture shops.' Another thought that we would all be more patriotic if we devoted our energy to fighting the insurance act. Another would not hang them in his kitchen while yet another described the vogue of French impressionist painting as having gone to such a length among 'log-rolling enthusiasts' that they even admired 'works that were rejected from the Salon forty years ago by the finest critics in the world.'

The first serious opposition began in the 'Irish Catholic,' the chief Dublin clerical paper, and Mr. William Murphy the organizer of the recent lock-out and Mr. Healy's financial supporter in his attack

upon Parnell, a man of great influence, brought to its support a few days later his newspapers 'The Evening Herald' and 'The Irish Independent,' the most popular of Irish daily papers. He replied to my poem 'To a wealthy man' (I was thinking of a very different wealthy man) from what he described as 'Paudeen's point of view,' and 'Paudeen's point of view' it was. The enthusiasm for 'Sir Hugh Lane's Corots'— one paper spelled the name repeatedly 'Crot'— being but 'an exotic fashion' waited 'some satirist like Gilbert' who 'killed the æsthetic craze,' and as for the rest 'there were no greater humbugs in the world than art critics and so-called experts.' As the first avowed reason for opposition, the necessities of the poor got but a few lines, not so many certainly as the objection of various persons to supply Sir Hugh Lane with 'a monument at the city's expense,' and as the gallery was supported by Mr. James Larkin, the chief labour leader, and important slum workers, I assume that the purpose of the opposition was not exclusively charitable.

These controversies, political, literary and artistic have showed that neither religion nor politics can of itself create minds with enough receptivity to become wise, or just and generous enough to make a nation. Other cities have been as stupid— Samuel Butler laughs at shocked Montreal for hiding

the Discobolus in a cellar — but Dublin is the capital of a nation, and an ancient race has nowhere else to look for an education. Goethe in 'Wilhelm Meister' describes a saintly and naturally gracious woman, who getting into a quarrel over some trumpery detail of religious observance, grows — she and all her little religious community — angry and vindictive. In Ireland I am constantly reminded of that fable of the futility of all discipline that is not of the whole being. Religious Ireland — and the pious protestants of my childhood were signal examples — thinks of divine things as a round of duties separated from life and not as an element that may be discovered in all circumstance and emotion, while political Ireland sees the good citizen but as a man who holds to certain opinions and not as a man of good will. Against all this we have but a few educated men and the remnants of an old traditional culture among the poor. Both were stronger forty years ago, before the rise of our new middle class which showed as its first public event, during the nine years of the Parnellite split, how base at moments of excitement are minds without culture.

THE DOLLS

The fable for this poem came into my head while I was giving some lectures in Dublin. I had noticed

once again how all thought among us is frozen into 'something other than human life.' After I had made the poem, I looked up one day into the blue of the sky, and suddenly imagined, as if lost in the blue of the sky stiff figures in procession. I remembered that they were the habitual image suggested by blue sky, and looking for a second fable called them 'The Magi,' complimentary forms to those enraged dolls.

THE HOUR-GLASS

A friend suggested to me the subject of this play, an Irish folk tale from Lady Wilde's 'Ancient Legends.' I have for years struggled with something which is charming in the naive legend but a platitude on the stage. I did not discover till a year ago that if the wise man humbled himself to the fool and received salvation as his reward, so much more powerful are pictures than words, no explanatory dialogue could set the matter right. I was faintly pleased when I converted a music-hall singer and kept him going to Mass for six weeks, so little responsibility does one feel for that mythological world, but I was always ashamed when I saw any friend of my own in the theatre. Now I have made my philosopher accept God's will, whatever it is, and find his courage again, and helped by the elaboration of verse, have so changed the fable that it is not false to my own thoughts of the world.

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